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FEATHERED FAVOURITES

TWELVE COLOURED PICTURES OF

BRITISH BIRDS

FROM DRAWINGS

BY JOSEPH WOLF



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THOMAS BOSWORTH, 215, REGENT STREET.

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THE HOUSE-SPARROW.

BARRY CORNWALL.



TOUCH not the little Sparrow, who doth build
His home so near us. He doth follow us
From spot to spot amidst the turbulent town,
And ne'er deserts us. To all other birds
The woods suffice, the rivers, the sweet fields,
And nature in her aspect mute and fair ;
But *he* doth herd with man. Blithe servant ! live,
Feed, and grow cheerful ! On my window's ledge
I'll leave thee every morning some fit food,
In payment of thy service.—Doth he serve ?—
Ay, serves and teaches. His familiar voice,
His look of love, his sure fidelity,
Bids us be gentle with so small a friend ;
And much we learn from acts of gentleness.
Doth he not teach ?—Ay, and doth serve us too,
Who clears our homes from many a toilsome thing,
Insect or reptile ! and when we do mark
With what nice care he builds his nest, and guards
His offspring from all harm, and how he goes,
A persevering, bold adventurer,
'Midst hostile tribes, twenty times big as he,
Skill, perseverance, courage, parent's love,—


THE HOUSE-SPARROW.

In all these acts we see, and may do well
In our own lives, perhaps, when need doth ask,
To imitate the little household bird.
Untiring follower ! what doth chain thee here !
What bonds 'tween thee and man ! Thy food the same
As their's who wing the woods,—thy voice as wild,
Thy wants, thy power, the same ; we nothing do
To serve thee, and few love thee ; yet thou hang'st
About our dwellings, like some humble friend,
Whom custom and kind thoughts do link to us,
And no neglect can banish.

So, long live
The household Sparrow ! may he thrive for ever !
For ever twitter forth his morning song,
A brief, but sweet domestic melody !
Long may he live ! and he who aims to kill
Our small companion, let him think how he
Would feel, if great men spurn'd him from their hearths,
Or tyrant doom'd him, who had done no wrong,
To pains or sudden death. Then let him think,
And he will spare this little trustful bird ;
And his one act of clemency will teach
His heart a lesson that shall widen it,
For nothing makes so bright the soul, as when
Pity doth temper wisdom.

THE HOUSE-SPARROW.

HOWITT.

“ FELLOW feeling makes us wondrous
kind,”
So sang the noble bard, who, like the swallow,
Flew through far climes and soared where
few can follow.

’Tis true ; and therefore still we find
That gentle spirits love the robin,
That comes, as Wordsworth says, “when winds are sob-
bing ;”

Pecks at your window ; sits upon your spade,
And often thanks you in a serenade.
But what is it that brings about you
That pert, conceited good-for-nothing Sparrow,
Which seems to say—“I’d do as well without you,”
Yet, never for a second,
Night or day,
Will be away,
Though hooted, shot at, nor once coaxed or beckoned ?
In town or country—in the densest alley
Of monstrous London—in the loneliest valley—
On palace-roof—on cottage-thatch,
On church or chapel—farm or shop,
The Sparrow’s still “the bird on the house-top.”

THE HOUSE-SPARROW.

I think 'twas Solomon who said so,
And in the bible having read so,
You find that his ubiquity
Extends itself far up into antiquity.
Yes, through all countries and all ages
While other birds have sung in woods or cages,
This noisy, impudent and shameless varlet
Though neither noble, rich, nor clad in scarlet,
Would have the highest place without the asking.
Upon your roof the lazy scamp is basking—
Chirping, scuffling, screaming, fighting,
Flying and fluttering up and down
From peep of day to evening brown.
You may be sleeping, sick, or writing,
And needing silence—there's the Sparrow,
Just at your window—and enough to harrow
The soul of Job in its severest season.
There, as it seemeth, for no other reason
But to confound you,—he has got
Up in the leaden gutter burning hot :
Every low scape-grace of the Sparrow-clan,
Loons of all ages,—grandsire, boy and man,
Old beldame Sparrow, wenches bold,
All met to wrangle, raffle, rant and scold.
Send out your man ! shoot ! blow to powder
The villanous company, that fiercer, louder,
Drive you distracted. There ! bang ! goes the gun,
And all the little lads are on the run
To see the slaughter ;—not a bird is slain—
There were some feathers flew—a leg was broke,

THE HOUSE-SPARROW.

But all went off as if it were a joke—
In comes your man—and there they are again !

* * * * *

But these Jack Sparrows ; why they love far more
Than all this singing nonsense, your barn-door !
They love your cherry-tree—your rows of peas,
Your ripening corn crop, and to live at ease !
You find no Sparrow in the far-off-woods—
No—he's not fond of hungry solitudes.
He better loves the meanest hamlet—where
Aught's to be had, the Sparrow will be there,
Sturdy and bold, and wrangling for his share.
The tender linnet bathes her sides and wings
In running brooks and purest forest-springs.
The Sparrow rolls and scuffles in the dust—
That is his washing, or his proper rust.

Before your carriage as you drive to town,
To his base meal the Sparrow settles down ;
He knows the safety-distance to an inch,
Up to that point he will not move or flinch ;—
You think your horse will crush him—no such thing—
That coachman's whip might clip his fluttering wing,
Or take his head off in a twink—but he
Knows better still, and liveth blithe and free.

At home he plagues the martins with his noise—
They build, he takes possession and enjoys ;
Or if he want it not, he takes it still,

THE HOUSE-SPARROW.

Just because teasing others is his will.
From hour to hour, from tedious day to day
He sits to drive the rightful one away.
At home, abroad, wherever seen or heard
Still is the Sparrow just the self-same bird ;
Thievish and clamorous, hardy, bold and base,
Unlike all others of the feathered race.
The bully of his tribe—to all beyond
The gipsy, beggar, knave, and vagabond !

MONTGOMERY.



PARROW, the gun is levell'd, quit that
wall.

—Without the will of Heaven, I cannot
fall.





THE WREN.

GRAHAME.



THE little woodland dwarf, the tiny Wren,
That from the root-sprigs trills her ditty clear.
Of stature most diminutive herself,
Not so her wondrous house ; for, strange to
tell !

Her's is the largest structure that is formed
By tuneful bill and breast. 'Neath some old root,
From which the sloping soil, by wintry rains,
Has been all worn away, she fixes up
Her curious dwelling, close, and vaulted o'er,
And in the side a little gateway porch,
In which (for I have seen) she'll sit and pipe
A merry stave of her shrill roundelay.
Nor always does a single gate suffice
For exit, and for entrance to her dome ;
For when (as sometimes haps) within a bush
She builds the artful fabric, then each side
Has its own portico. But, mark within !
How skilfully the finest plumes and downs
Are softly warped ; how closely all around
The outer layers of moss ! each circumstance
Most artfully contrived to favour warmth !

THE WREN.

Here read the reason of the vaulted roof ;
Here Providence compensates, ever kind,
The enormous disproportion that subsists
Between the mother and the numerous brood,
Which her small bulk must quicken into life.
Fifteen white spherules, small as moorland hare-bell,
And prettily bespecked like fox-glove flower,
Complete her number. Twice five days she sits,
Fed by her partner, never flitting off,
Save when the morning sun is high, to drink
A dewdrop from the nearest flowret cup.

But now behold the greatest of this train
Of miracles, stupendously minute ;
The numerous progeny, clamant for food,
Supplied by two small bills, and feeble wings
Of narrow range ; supplied, ay, duly fed,
Fed in the dark, and yet not one forgot !

THE WREN.

GRAHAME.



BESIDES the Redbreast's note, one other strain,
One summer strain, on wintry days is heard.
Amid the leafless thorn the merry Wren,
When icicles hang dripping from the rock,
Pipes her perennial lay ; even when the flakes,
Broad as her pinions, fall, she lightly flies
Athwart the shower, and sings upon the wing.

While thus the smallest of the plummy tribes
Defies the storm, others there are that fly,
Long ere the winter lours, to genial skies ;
Nor this cold clime revisit, till the blooms
Of parting spring blow 'mid the summer buds.

THE WREN.

REV. F. W. FABER, M.A.



HERE is a bay, all still and lone,
And in the shade one broad grey stone,
Where at the evening hour,
The sun upon the water weaves
Motions of light among the leaves
Of a low-hanging bower ;

And one old sycamore that dips
Into the stream its dark green tips,
And drinks all day and night :
And opposite, the mountain high
Doth intercept the deep blue sky,
And shuts it out from sight.

Last year it was my haunted seat,
And every evening did I meet
A grave and solemn Wren :
He sat and never spoke a word
A holy and religious bird
He seemed unto me then.

THE WREN.

I thought perchance, that sin and strife
Might in a winged creature's life,
 Be somehow strangely blent ;
So hermit-like he lived apart,
And might be in his little heart
 A woodland penitent !

Deceitful thing ! into the brook
Hour after hour, a stedfast look
 From off his perch was sent ;
And yet, I thought, his eyes too bright,
Too happy for an anchorite
 On lonely penance bent.

Ah ! yes, for long his nest hath been
Behind yon alder's leafy screen
 By Rothay's chiming waters ;
Two rapid years are run, and now
This monk hath peopled every bough
 With little sons and daughters.

I will not blame thee, Friar Wren,
Because among stout-hearted men
 Some truant monks there be ;
And, if you could their names collect,
I rather more than half suspect
 That I should not be free.

Ere while I dreamed of cloistered cells,
Of gloomy courts and matin bells,
 And painted windows rare ;

THE WREN.

But common life's less real gleams
Shone warm on my monastic dreams,
And melted them in air.

My captive heart is altered now ;
And, had I but one little bough
Of thy green alder-tree,
I would not live too long alone,
Or languish there for want of one
To share the nest with me !

MONTGOMERY.



REN, canst thou squeeze into a hole so small?
—Ay, with nine nestlings too, and room for
all ;
Go, compass sea and land in search of bliss,
Then tell me if you find a happier home than this.

THE WREN.

JENNINGS.



LITTLE warbler ! long hast thou
Perch'd beneath yon spreading bough,—
Sung beneath yon ivied tree ;—
Thy mossy nest I yearly see,
Safe from all thy peace annoys—
Claws of cats and cruel boys.
We often hear thy *chit-chit* song
Call thy tiny brood along ;
While, in her nest, or on a spray,
The throstle charms us with her lay !
Little Warbler ! cheerful Wren !
Spring-time's come, and *thou* again,
Little warbler ! thou, like me,
Delight'st in home and harmless glee ;
What of peace is to be found
Circles all thy dwelling round ;
Here with love beneath the shade,
Thy tranquil happiness is made :
With thy tiny, faithful mate,
Here meet'st resign'd the frowns of fate ;
While prouder birds fly high or far,
Or mix them in the strife of war,—
Or restless, through the wide world range,
And restless, still delight in change,

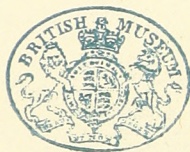
THE WREN.

Thou mak'st *thy home*, a place of *rest*,
Affection, love, and that is best !
Then welcome, welcome, faithful Wren !
Thrice welcome to thy home again !

JOHN CLARE.



HY is the Cuckoo's melody preferred,
And Nightingale's rich song so fondly praised
In poet's rhymes ? Is there no other bird
Of Nature's minstrelsy that ort hath raised
One's heart to ecstasy and mirth so well ?
I judge not how another's taste is caught ;
With mine are other birds that bear the bell,
Whose song hath crowds of happy memories brought ;
Such the wood Robin singing in the dell,
And little Wren that many a time hath sought
Shelter from showers in huts where I may dwell,
In early Spring, the tenant of the plain,
Tending my sheep, and still they come to tell
The happy stories of the past again.





THE BLACKCAP.

WARING.



H ! fair befall thee, gay Fauvette,
With trilling song and crown of jet ;
Thy pleasant notes with joy I hail,
Floating on the vernal gale.

Far hast thou flown on downy wing,
To be our guest in early Spring :
In that first dawning of the year,
Pouring a strain as rich and clear
As is the Blackbird's mellow lay,
In later hours of flowery May.
While April skies to grove and field,
Alternate shade and sunshine yield,
I hear thy wild and joyous strain,
And give thee welcome once again.
Come, build within my hawthorn bower,
And shade thy nurslings with its flower ;
Or where my wreathed woodbines twine,
Make there a home for thee and thine.
Now fair befall thee, gay Fauvette,
With trilling song and crown of jet !

THE BLACKCAP.

WILLIAM HOWITT.



COME ye, come ye, to the green, green wood,
Loudly the Blackbird is singing ;
The Squirrel is feasting on blossom and bud,
And the curled fern is springing.
Here you may sleep, in the wood so deep,
When the moon is so wan and so weary,
And sweetly awake, when the sun through the brake
Bids the Fauvet and Whitethroat sing cheery.

BISHOP MANT.



FAIN, 'mid the hawthorn's budding boughs,
Or where the dark green ivy shows
Its purple fruit the foliage through,
Would I the early Blackcap view ;
With sable cowl, and amice grey,
Arrived from regions far away ;
Like palmer from some sainted shrine,
Or holy hills of Palestine :
And hear his desultory bill
Such notes of varying cadence trill,
That mimic art, that quavered strain,
May strive to match, but strive in vain.

THE BLACKCAP.

JOHN CLARE.

THE PETTYCHAP'S NEST.



WELL ! in my many walks I've rarely found
A place less likely for a bird to form
Its nest—close by the rut-gulled waggon road,
And on the almost bare foot-trodden ground,
With scarce a clump of grass to keep it warm !
Where not a thistle spreads its spears abroad,
Or prickly bush, to shield it from harm's way ;
And yet so snugly made, that none may spy
It out, save peradventure. You and I
Had surely passed it in our walk to-day,
Had chance not led us by it !—Nay, e'en now,
Had not the old bird heard us trampling by,
And fluttered out, we had not seen it lie,
Brown as the road-way side. Small bits of hay
Plucked from the old propt haystack's bleachy brow,
And withered leaves, make up its outward wall,
Which from the gnarl'd oak-dotterel yearly fall,
And in the old hedge-bottom rot away.
Built like an oven, through a little hole,
Scarcely admitting e'en two fingers in,
Hard to discern, the birds snug entrance win.
'Tis lined with feathers warm as silken stole,
Softer than seats of down for painless ease,

THE BLACKCAP.

And full of eggs scarce bigger e'en than peas !
Here's one most delicate, with spots as small
As dust, and of a faint and pinky red.
—Stop ! here's the bird—that woodman at the gap
Frightened him from the hedge :—'tis olive-green.
Well ! I declare it is the Pettychap !
Not bigger than the wren, and seldom seen.
I've often found her nest in chance's way,
When I in pathless woods did idly roam ;
But never did I dream until to-day
A spot like this would be her chosen home.





THE SWALLOW.

GRAHAME.



LESS loud, but not less clear, His humbler works
Proclaim his power ; the Swallow knows her
time,
And, on the vernal breezes, wings her way,
O'er mountain, plain, and far-extending seas,
From Afric's torrid sands to Britain shore.
Before the cuckoo's note, she, twittering, gay,
Skims 'long the brook, or o'er the brnshwood tops,
When dance the midgy clouds in warping maze
Confused : 'tis thus, by her, the air is swept
Of insect myriads, that would else infest
The greenwood walk, blighting each rural joy :
For this,—if pity plead in vain,—O, spare
Her clay-built home ! Her all, her young, she trusts,
Trusts to the power of man : fearful, *herself*
She never trusts ; free, on the summer morn,
She, at his window, hails the rising sun.—
Twice seven days she broods ; then on the wing,
From morn to dewy eve, unceasing plies,
Save when she feeds or cherishes her young ;
And oft she's seen, beneath her little porch,

THE SWALLOW.

Clinging supine, to deal the air-gleaned food.

From her the husbandman the coming shower
Foretells : Along the mead closely she skiffs,
Or o'er the streamlet pool she skims, so near,
That, from her dipping wing, the wavy circlets
Spread to the shore ; then fall the single drops,
Prelusive of the shower.

The Martins, too,
The dwellers in the ruined castle wall,
When low'rs the sky a flight less lofty wheel.
Presageful of the thunder peal, when deep
A boding silence broods o'er all the vale,
From airy altitudes they stoop, and fly
Swiftly, with shrillest scream, round and around
The rugged battlements ; or fleetly dart
Through loopholes, whence the shaft was wont to glance ;
Or thrid the window of the lofty bower,
Where hapless royalty, with care-closed eyes,
Woo'd sleep in vain, foreboding what befel,—
The loss of friends, of country, freedom, life !

Long ere the wintry gusts, with chilly sweep,
Sigh through the leafless groves, the swallow tribes,
Heaven-warned, in airy bevvies congregate,
Or clustering sit, as if in deep consult
What time to launch ; but, lingering, they wait,
Until the feeble of the latest broods
Have gathered strength, the sea-ward path to brave.
At last the farewell twitter spreading sounds,

THE SWALLOW.

Aloft they fly, and melt in distant air.
Far o'er the British sea, in westering course,
O'er the Biscayan mountain-waves they glide :
Then o'er Iberian plains, through fields of air,
Perfumed by orchard groves, where lowly bends
The orange bough beneath its juicy load,
And over Calpe's iron-fenced rock, their course,
To Mauritania's sunny plains, they urge.

CHARLOTTE SMITH.



HE welcome guest of settled spring,
The *Swallow*, too, is come at last ;
Just at sun-set, when thrushes sing,
I saw her dash with rapid wing,
And hailed her as she passed.

Come, summer visitant, attach
To my reed roof your nest of clay,
And let my ear your music catch
Low twittering underneath the thatch,
At the green dawn of day.

THE SWALLOW.

ROBERT FRANKLIN.



ELCOME, welcome, feathered stranger,

Now the sun bids nature smile ;

Safe arrived, and free from danger,

Welcome to our blooming isle !

Still twitter on my lowly roof,

And hail me at the dawn of day,

Each morn the recollected proof

Of time that ever fleets away.

Fond of sunshine, fond of shade,

Fond of skies serene and clear,

Ev'n transient storms thy joy invade

In fairest seasons of the year :

What makes thee seek a milder clime,

What bids thee shun the wintry gale,

How know'st thou thy departing time ?

Hail ! wondrous bird ! hail, Swallow, hail !

Sure something more to thee is given,

Than myriads of the feathered race,

Some gift divine, some spark from heaven,

That guides thy flight from place to place :

Still freely come, still freely go,

And blessings crown thy vigorous wing,

May thy rude flight meet no rude foe,

Delightful messenger of Spring !

THE SWALLOW.

W. HOWITT.



WAY, away, why dost thou linger here,
When all thy fellows o'er the sea have passed?
Wert thou the earliest comer of the year,
Loving our land, and so dost stay the last?
And is the sound of growing streams unheard?
Dost thou not see the woods are fading fast,
Whilst the dull leaves with wailful winds are stirred?
Haste, haste to other climes, thou solitary bird!

Thy coming was in lovelier skies—thy wing,
Long wearied, rested in delightful bowers;
Thou camest when the living breath of spring
Had filled the world with gladness and with flowers!
Skyward the carolling lark no longer towers—
Alone we hear the robin's pensive lay;
And from the sky of beauty darkness lours:
Thy coming was with hope, but thou dost stay
'Midst melancholy thoughts, that dwell upon decay.

THE SWALLOW.

MONTGOMERY.



SWALLOW, why homeward turned thy joyful wing?
—In a far land I heard the voice of spring;
I found myself that moment on the way;
My wings, my wings, they had not power to stay.

HAYLEY.



YE gentle birds, that perch aloof,
And smooth your pinions on my roof;
Preparing for departure hence,
Ere winter's angry threats commence;
Like you, my soul would smooth her plume
For longer flights, beyond the tomb.





THE WOODPECKER.

MARY HOWITT.



HE Woodpecker green he has not his abiding
Where the owls and the bats from the day-
light are hiding ;
Where the bright mountain-streams glide on
rock-beds away,

The dark water-ousel may warble and play ;
In the sedge of the river the reed-sparrow build ;
And the pewitt among the brown clods of the field ;
The sea-gull may scream on the breast of the tide ;
On the foam-crested billows the petrel may ride ;
But the Woodpecker asketh nor river nor sea ;
Give him but the old forest, and old forest-tree,
And he'll leave to the proud lonely eagle the height
Of the mist-shrouded precipice splintered and white ;
And he'll leave to the gorcock the heather and fern,
And the lake of the valley to woodcock and hern ;
To the sky-lark he'll leave the wide fields of the air,
The sunshine and rainbow ne'er tempted him there.
The greenwood for him is the place of his rest,
And the broad-branching tree is the home he loves best.
Let us go to the haunt of the Woodpecker green,
In those depths of the wood there is much to be seen.

THE WOODPECKER.

There the wild-rose and woodbine weave fairy-land
 bowers,
And the moth-mullein grows with its pale yellow flowers ;
There the hum of the bees through the noon-day is heard,
And the chirp, and the cry, and the song of the bird ;
There up the tree-trunk, like a fly on the wall,
To pick the grey moss, runs the tree-creeper small ;
There the wren golden-crested, so lovely to see,
Hangs its delicate nest from the twigs of the tree ;
And there coos the ring-dove—oh, who would not go,
That voice of the wood to hear, dreamy and low !
Yes, come to the wood—to the Woodpecker's tree,
There is joy 'mong the green leaves for thee and for me !

Hark ! hear you that laughter so loud and so long ?—
Again now !—it drowneth the wood-linnet's song !
'Tis the Woodpecker laughing !—the comical elf !
His soul must be merry to laugh to himself !—
And now we are nearer—speak low—be not heard !
Though he's merry at heart he's a shy, timid bird.
Hark !—now he is tapping the old, hollow tree :—
One step farther on—now look upward—that's he !
Oh, the exquisite bird !—with his downward-hung head.
With his richly dyed greens—his pale yellow and red !
On the gnarled tree-trunk with its sober-toned gray,
What a beautiful mingling of colours are they !
Ah, the words you have spoken have frightened the bird—
For by him the lowest of whispers were heard ;
Or a footfall as light as the breezes, that pass
Scarcely bending the flowers, he perceives on the grass.

THE WOODPECKER.

The squirrel above him might chatter and chide ;
And the purple-winged jay scream on every side ;
The great winds might blow, and the thunder might roll,
Yet the fearless Woodpecker still cling to the bole ;
But soon as a footstep that's human is heard,
A quick terror springs to the heart of the bird !
For man, the oppressor and tyrant, has made
The free harmless dwellers of nature afraid !

'Neath the fork of the branch, in the tree's hollow bole,
Has the timid Woodpecker crept into his hole ;
For there is his home in deep privacy hid,
Like a chamber scooped into a far pyramid ;
And there is his mate, as secure as can be,
And his little young Woodpeckers deep in the tree.
And not till he thinks there is no one about,
Will he come to his portal and slyly peep out ;
And then, when we're up at the end of the lane,
We shall hear the old Woodpecker laughing again.

THE WOODPECKER.

MOORE.



I KNEW by the smoke, that so gracefully curl'd
Above the green elms, that a cottage was
near,
And I said, " If there's peace to be found in
the world,
A heart that was humble might hope for it here !"

It was noon, and on flowers that languish'd around
In silence repos'd the voluptuous bee ;
Every leaf was at rest, and I heard not a sound
But the Woodpecker tapping the hollow beech-tree.





THE WATER-WAGTAIL.

MONTGOMERY.



N the walls that guard my prison,
Swelling with fantastic pride,
Brisk and merry as the season,
I a feather'd coxcomb spied :

When the little hopping elf
Gaily thus amused himself.

“ Hear your sovereign's proclamation,
All good subjects, young and old :
I'm the Lord of the Creation ;
I—a Water-Wagtail bold !
All around, and all you see,
All the world, was made for ME !

“ Yonder sun, so proudly shining,
Rises—when I leave my nest ;
And, behind the hills declining,
Sets—when I retire to rest :
Morn and evening, thus you see,
Day and night, were made for ME !

THE WATER-WAGTAIL.

“ Vernal gales to love invite me ;
Summer sheds for me her beams ;
Autumn’s jovial scenes delight me ;
Winter paves with ice my streams :
All the year is mine, you see ;
Seasons change, like moons, for ME !

“ On the heads of giant mountains,
Or beneath the shady trees,
By the banks of warbling fountains,
I enjoy myself at ease :
Hills and valleys, thus you see,
Groves and rivers, made for ME !

“ Boundless are my vast dominions ;
I can hop, or swim, or fly ;
When I please, my towering pinions
Trace my empire through the sky :
Air and elements, you see,
Heaven and earth, were made for ME !

“ Birds and insects, beasts and fishes,
All their humble distance keep ;
Man, subservient to my wishes,
Sows the harvest which I reap :
Mighty man himself, you see,
All that breathe, were made for ME !

THE WATER-WAGTAIL.

“ ’Twas for my accommodation
Nature rose when I was born ;
Should I die—the whole creation
Back to nothing would return :
Sun, moon, stars, the world, you see,
Sprung—exist—will fall—with ME ! ”

Here the pretty prattler, ending,
Spread his wings to soar away ;
But a cruel Hawk, descending,
Pounced him up—an helpless prey :
—Couldst thou not, poor Wagtail ! see
That the Hawk was made for THEE ?

THE WATER-WAGTAIL.

MARY HOWITT.



H, the sunny summer time !

Oh, the leafy summer time !

Merry is the bird's life,

When the year is in its prime !

Birds are by the water-falls

Dashing in the rainbow-spray ;

Everywhere, everywhere

Light and lovely there are they !

Birds are in the forest old,

Building in each hoary tree ;

Birds are on the green hills ;

Birds are by the sea !

On the moor, and in the fen,

'Mong the wortle-berries green ;

In the yellow furze-bush

There the joyous bird is seen ;

In the heather on the hill ;

All among the mountain thyme ;

By the little brook-sides,

Where the sparkling waters chime ;

In the crag ; and on the peak,

Splintered, savage, wild, and bare,

There the bird with wild wing

Wheelet through the air.





THE TITMOUSE.

MARY HOWITT.



HE merry Titmouse is a comical fellow ;
He weareth a plumage of purple and yellow,
Barred over with black, and with white in-
terlaced ;—

Depend on't, the Titmouse has excellent taste.

And he, like his betters of noble old blood,
Keeps up, with great spirit, a family feud ;
A feud with the owl ;—and why ? would you know,—
An old, by-gone quarrel of ages ago :—

Perhaps in the Ark might be taken offence,—
But I know not, indeed, of the where and the whence ;—
Only this is quite true,—let them meet as they may,
Having quarrelled long since, they would quarrel to-day.

But we'll leave them to settle this ancient affair,
And now look at his nest, made with exquisite care,
Of lichen, and moss, and the soft downy feather,
And the web of the spider to keep it together.

THE TITMOUSE.

Is a brick out of place by your window ?—don't send
For the man with the trowel the fracture to mend,
Through the dry months of summer, just leave it alone,
For the poor little Titmouse has made it his own.

Peep in now, and look at that wonderful labour ;
And be glad to have near you so merry a neighbour ;
His work unto him is no trouble—behold
For one moment his motions, so tricky and bold.

How he twists, how he turns with a harlequin grace !
He can't lift a feather without a grimace ;
He carries the moss in his bill with an air ;
And he laughs at the spider he robs of his lair.

See his round, burley head, that is like a Friar Tuck,
And his glancing black eye that is worthy of Puck ;
Saw you ever a merrier creature than he ?
Oh, no !—make him welcome, as welcome can be !

His nest now is finished with fine cobweb thread,
And the eggs are laid in it, white, speckled with red ;
Now knock at the wall, or rap loud on the pane,
Hark ! what is that rapping so briskly again !

'Tis the blithe mother-bird, all alive and alert,
As her mate, every whit, is she comic and pert ;
Rap you once,—she raps twice ;—she has nothing to do,
But to keep her eggs warm, and be neighbourly too !

THE TITMOUSE.

Oh, what ! did you say that the Titmouse was stealing,
That he ate your pear-buds while he sham'd to be reeling ;
And nipped off the apricot-bloom in his fun ?
And that shortly you'll end his career with a gun !

Oh ! hold back your hand,—'twere a deed to repent ;
Of your blame the poor fellow is quite innocent,—
Stand back for one moment—anon he'll be here,
He believes you his friend, and he thinks not of fear.

Here he comes !—See how drolly he looketh askew ;—
And now hangs head downward ; now glances on you !
Be not rash, though he light on your apricot-bough,—
Though he touches a bud,—there, he touches it now !

There, he's got what he wanted, and off he has flown !—
Now look at the apricot bud,—is it gone ?
Not the apricot bud,—but the grub that was in it !—
You may thank him,—he does you a service each minute.

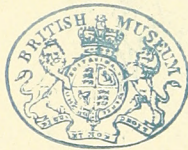
Then love the poor Titmouse, and welcome him too,
Great beauty is there in his yellow and blue ;
He's a fine cheerful fellow—so let him be free
Of your garden—to build in your wall or your tree !

THE TITMOUSE.

MONTGOMERY.



EAST, nimblest, merriest bird of Albion's isle,
I cannot look on thee without a smile.
—I envy thee the sight, for all my glee
Could never yet extort a smile from me ;
Think what a tiresome thing my life must be.





THE KING-FISHER.

ANON.



HE Halcyon flew across the stream,
And the silver brooklet caught the gleam ;
The glittering flash of his dazzling wings
Was such as the gorgeous rainbow flings,
In broken rays through the tearful sky,
On a sunny eve in bright July :
His radiant sheen the trees between,
Like the spangled scarf of a fairy queen,
Was rich to the view, as the gayest hue
Of the brightest flower that ever grew.
Its blended beam was brighter than
The Orient lilies of Shushan,
Twining around the brightest rose
In Sharon's scented vale that grows :
The diamond drops from the brook that flashed,
As along the crystal wave it dashed,
Showed like the sunbeam glancing through
The morning gems of pearly dew.
A type of Hope it seemed to be,
So soft, and fresh, and fair to see.

THE KING-FISHER.

ANON.



HE mariners with lightsome heart
From their late sheltering cove depart,
Spreading with joy the snowy sail
To catch the favorable gale ;
And why ? Because their curious sight
Has marked the Halcyon's landward flight :
Heralds of peace, to seamen dear,
They go their tender brood to rear.
The fearless bird in patience broods,
Till fourteen suns have gilt the floods,
And fourteen nights their dews have shed
Upon her unprotected head :
Then, from their silver prison free,
Her nestlings seek the tranquil sea ;
And soon, in azure plumage drest,
Forsake the shelter of the nest ;
But till those watching hours are past,
Lest sudden swell or angry blast
Destroy the Halcyon's fragile brood,
The God of Nature stills the flood.

THE KING-FISHER.

Oh, Christian pilgrim ! mark the care
Bestowed upon the fowls of air ;
And learn to check each anxious thought,
That would a Father's mercy doubt.
The clouds of earth are round thee now,
The storm is high, thy hopes are low ;
But raise thy drooping head, and see,
By faith, the rest reserved for thee.
Servant of Christ, to thee are given
The endless Halcyon days of Heaven.

MONTGOMERY.



HY dost thou hide thy beauty from the sun ?
—The eye of man, but not of Heaven, I shun ;
Beneath the mossy bank, with alders crowned,
I build and brood where running waters sound ;
There, there the halcyon peace may still be found.

THE WOODLARK.

BURNS.



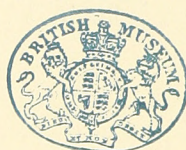
STAY, sweet warbling Woodlark stay,
Nor quit for me the trembling spray,
A hapless lover courts thy lay,
Thy soothing fond complaining.

Again, again that tender part,
That I may catch thy melting art;
For surely that wad touch the heart
Who kills me wi' disdainin'.

Say, was thy little mate unkind,
And heard thee as the careless wind?
Oh nocht but love and sorrow join'd
Sic notes of woe could wauken.

Thou tells o'never-ending care
O' speechless grief, and dark despair;
For pity's sake, sweet bird nae mair!
Or my poor heart is broken!





THE WOODLARK.

JENNINGS.

THE WOODLARK'S INVOCATION.



ODDESS of the realm of song !
Round whose throne the warblers throng,
From thy bright cerulean sphere,
Deign our humble notes to hear !

Love demands our earliest lay ;—
Love, the monarch of our May ;—
Io pæans let us sing
While we welcome laughing spring.

May, with feet bedropp'd with dew,
On yon hill-top is in view ;
May, whose arch look, winning wiles,
Youth on tip-toe oft beguiles.

Goddess of the soul of song !
Thou to whom delights belong,
Deign to prompt the Warbler's lay ;
Deign to deck the coming day.

THE WOODLARK.

MONTGOMERY.



HY notes are silenced, and thy plumage mew'd ;
Say, drooping minstrel, both shall be renew'd.
—Voice will return,—I cannot choose but
sing ;

Yet liberty alone can plume my wing ;
Oh ! give me that !—I will not, cannot fly
Within a cage less ample than the sky ;
Then shalt thou hear, as if an angel sung,
Unseen in air, heaven's music from my tongue :
Oh ! give me that !—I cannot rest at ease
On meaner perches than the forest trees ;
There, in thy walk, while evening shadows roll,
My song shall melt into thine inmost soul ;
But, till thou let thy captive bird depart,
The sweetness of my strain shall wring thy heart.





THE SWAN.

WORDSWORTH.



AIR is the Swan, whose majesty prevailing
O'er breezeless water, on Locarno's lake,
Bears him on while proudly sailing,
He leaves behind a moon-illumin'd wake :

Behold ! the mantling spirit of reserve
Fashions his neck into a goodly curve ;
An arch thrown back between luxuriant wings
Of whitest garniture, like fir-tree boughs
To which, on some unruffled morning, clings
A flaky weight of winter's purest snows !
Behold ! as with a gushing impulse, heaves
That downy prow, and softly cleaves
The mirror of the crystal flood,
Vanish inverted hill, and shadowy wood,
And pendant rocks, where'er, in gliding state,
Winds the mute creature without visible mate
Or rival, save the Queen of night,
Showering down a silver light,
From heaven, upon her chosen favourite.

THE SWAN.

TENNYSON.

THE DYING SWAN.



THE plain was grassy, wild and bare,
Wide, wild, and open to the air,
Which had built up everywhere
An under-roof of doleful gray.
With an inner voice the river ran,
Adown it floated a dying swan,
And loudly did lament.
It was the middle of the day.
Ever the weary wind went on,
And took the reed-tops as it went.


Some blue peaks in the distance rose,
And white against the cold-white sky,
Shone out their crowning snows.
One willow over the river wept,
And shook the wave as the wind did sigh ;
Above in the wind was the swallow,
Chasing itself at its own wild will,
And far thro' the marish green and still
The tangled water-courses slept,
Shot over with purple, and green, and yellow.

THE SWAN.


The wild Swan's death-hymn took the soul
Of that waste place with joy
Hidden in sorrow : at first to the ear
The warble was low, and full and clear ;
And floating about the under-sky,
Prevailing in weakness, the coronach stole
Sometimes afar, and sometimes anear ;
But anon her awful jubilant voice,
With a music strange and manifold,
Flow'd forth on a carol free and bold :
As when a mighty people rejoice
With shawms, and with cymbals, and harps of gold,
And the tumult of their acclaim is roll'd
Thro' the open gates of the city afar,
To the shepherd who watcheth the evening star.
And the creeping mosses and clambering weeds,
And the willow-branches hoar and dank,
And the wavy swell of the sougling reeds,
And the wave-worn horns of the echoing bank,
And the silvery marish-flowers that throng
The desolate creeks and pools among,
Were flooded over with eddying song.

THE SWAN.

THOMSON.

 HE stately sailing Swan
Gives out his snowy plumage to the gale,
And arching proud his neck, with oary feet,
Bears forward fierce, and guards his osier isle,
Protective of his young.

MILTON.

 HE Swan with arched neck
Between her white wings mantling proudly
rows
Her state with oary feet.





THE EAGLE.

GRAHAME.



MID Lochaber's wilds, or dark Glencoe,
High up the pillared mountain's steepest side,
The Eagle, from her eyry on the crag
Of over-jutting rock, beholds afar.

Viewing the distant flocks, with ranging eye
She meditates the prey ; but waits the time
When seas of mist extend along the vale,
And, rising gradual, reach her lofty shore :
Up then to sunny regions of the air
She soars, and looks upon the white-wreathed summits
Of mountains, seeming ocean isles, then down
She plunges, stretching through the hazy deep ;
Unseen she flies, and, on her playful quarry,
Pounces unseen : The shepherd knows his loss,
When high o'er-head he hears a passing bleat
Faint, and more faintly, dying far away.
And now aloft she bends her homeward course,
Loaded, yet light ; and soon her youngling pair,
Joyful descry her buoyant wing emerge
And float along the cloud ; fluttering they stoop
Upon the dizzy brink, as if they aimed

THE EAGLE.

To try the abyss, and meet her coming breast ;
But soon her coming breast, and outstretched wings,
Glide shadowing down, and close upon their heads.

* * * *

Nor does the wintry blast, the drifting fall,
Shrouded in night, and, with a death-hand grasp,
Benumbing life, drive her to seek the roof
Of cave, or hollow cliff ; firm on her perch,
Her ancient and accustomed rock, she sits,
With wing-couched head, and, to the morning light,
Appears a frost-rent fragment, coped with snow.

HEMANS.

THE WOUNDED EAGLE.



EAGLE ! this is not thy sphere !
Warrior-bird, what seek'st thou here ?
Wherefore by the fountain's brink
Doth thy royal pinion sink ?
Wherefore on the violet's bed
Lay'st thou thus thy drooping head ?
Thou, that hold'st the blast in scorn,
Thou, that wear'st the wings of morn !

Eagle ! wilt thou not arise ?
Look upon thine own bright skies !
Lift thy glance ! the fiery sun
There his pride of place has won,

THE EAGLE.

And the mountain lark is there,
And sweet sound hath fill'd the air :
Hast thou left that realm on high ?
—Oh, it can be but to die !

Eagle ! Eagle ! thou hast bowed
From thine empire o'er the cloud !
Thou that hadst ethereal birth,
Thou hast stoop'd too near the earth,
And the hunter's shaft hath found thee,
And the toils of death have bound thee,
—Wherefore did'st thou leave thy place,
Creature of a kingly race ?

Wert thou weary of thy throne ?
Was the sky's dominion lone ?
Chill and lone it well might be,
Yet that mighty wing was free !
Now the chain is o'er thee cast :
From thy heart the blood flows fast,
—Woe for gifted souls and high !
Is not such their destiny ?

BARBAULD.



HE tawny Eagle seats his callow brood
High on the cliff, and feasts his young with
blood ;
On Snowdon's rocks, or Orkney's wide do-
main,

THE EAGLE.

Whose beetling cliffs o'erhang the western main,
The royal bird his lonely kingdom forms
Amidst the gathering clouds and sullen storms ;
Through the wide waste of air he darts his sight,
And holds his sounding pinions pois'd for flight ;
With cruel eye premeditates the war,
And marks his destin'd victim from afar :
Descending in a whirlwind to the ground,
His pinions like the rush of waters sound ;
The fairest of the fold he bears away,
And to his nest compels the struggling prey ;
He scorns the game by meaner hunters tore,
And dips his talons in no vulgar gore.

TENNYSON.



He clasps the crag with hooked hands ;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls ;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.



THE WILD DUCK.

WORDSWORTH.

THE WILD DUCK'S NEST.



HE imperial consort of the fairy king
Owns not a sylvan bower ; or gorgeous cell
With emerald floored, and with purpureal
shell

Ceilinged and roofed ; that is so fair a thing
As this low structure—for the tasks of spring
Prepared by one who loves the buoyant swell
Of the brisk waves, yet here consents to dwell ;
And spreads in steadfast peace her brooding wing.
Words cannot paint the o'ershadowing yew-tree bough,
And dimly-gleaming nest,—a hollow crown
Of golden leaves inlaid with silver down,
Fine as the mother's softest plumes allow :
I gaze—and almost wish to lay aside
Humanity, weak slave of cumbrous pride !

THE WILD DUCK.

GRAHAME.

THE WILD DUCK AND HER BROOD.



OW calm that little lake ! no breath of wind
Sighs through the reeds ; a clear abyss it seems,
Held in the concave of the inverted sky,—
In which is seen the rook's dull flagging wing
Move o'er the silvery clouds. How peaceful sails
Yon little fleet, the wild duck and her brood !
Fearless of harm, they row their easy way ;
The water-lily, 'neath the plummy prows,
Dips, re-appearing in their dimpled track.
Yet, even amid that scene of peace, the noise
Of war, unequal, dastard war, intrudes.
Yon revel rout of men, and boys, and dogs,
Boisterous approach ; the spaniel dashes in ;
Quick he descries the prey ; and faster swims,
And eager barks ; the harmless flock, dismayed,
Hasten to gain the thickest grove of reeds,
All but the parent pair ; they, floating, wait
To lure the foe, and lead him from their young ;
But soon themselves are forced to seek the shore.
Vain then the buoyant wing ; the leaden storm
Arrests their flight ; they, fluttering, bleeding fall,
And tinge the troubled bosom of the lake.

THE WILD DUCK.

BRYANT.



HITHER, 'midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps
of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou
pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As darkly painted on the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean-side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast,—
The desert and illimitable air,—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

THE WILD DUCK.

All day thy wings have fann'd,
At that far height, the cold thin atmosphere ;
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end ;—
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest
And scream among thy fellows ; reeds shall bend
Soon o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone—the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form : yet, on my heart,
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He, who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

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